

11-20-00

Docket No.
23267/19C2**UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL**
(Small Entity)*(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 CFR 1.53(b))*

Total Pages in this Submission

TO THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS**Box Patent Application**
Washington, D.C. 20231

Transmitted herewith for filing under 35 U.S.C. 111(a) and 37 C.F.R. 1.53(b) is a new utility patent application for an invention entitled:

Additive For, Treatment Fluid For and Method of Plugging A Tubing/Casing Annulus in a Wellbore

and invented by:

Boyce D. Burts, Jr.If a **CONTINUATION APPLICATION**, check appropriate box and supply the requisite information:☒ **Continuation** ☐ **Divisional** ☐ **Continuation-in-part (CIP)** of prior application No.: 08/962,209

Which is a:

☒ **Continuation** ☐ **Divisional** ☐ **Continuation-in-part (CIP)** of prior application No.: _____

Which is a:

☐ **Continuation** ☐ **Divisional** ☐ **Continuation-in-part (CIP)** of prior application No.: _____

Enclosed are:

Application Elements1. ☐ Filing fee as calculated and transmitted as described below2. ☒ Specification having 45 pages and including the following:

- a. ☒ Descriptive Title of the Invention
- b. ☐ Cross References to Related Applications *(if applicable)*
- c. ☐ Statement Regarding Federally-sponsored Research/Development *(if applicable)*
- d. ☐ Reference to Microfiche Appendix *(if applicable)*
- e. ☒ Background of the Invention
- f. ☒ Brief Summary of the Invention
- g. ☐ Brief Description of the Drawings *(if drawings filed)*
- h. ☐ Detailed Description
- i. ☐ Claim(s) as Classified Below
- j. ☒ Abstract of the Disclosure

UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL (Small Entity)

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Application Elements (Continued)

3. ☐ Drawing(s) (when necessary as prescribed by 35 USC 113)
- a. ☐ Formal b. ☐ Informal Number of Sheets _____
4. ☐ Oath or Declaration
- a. ☐ Newly executed (original or copy) ☐ Unexecuted
- b. ☒ Copy from a prior application (37 CFR 1.63(d)) (for continuation/divisional application only)
- c. ☐ With Power of Attorney ☐ Without Power of Attorney
- d. ☐ DELETION OF INVENTOR(S)
Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application,
see 37 C.F.R. 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).
5. ☐ Incorporation By Reference (usable if Box 4b is checked)
The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a copy of the oath or declaration is supplied under
Box 4b, is considered as being part of the disclosure of the accompanying application and is hereby
incorporated by reference therein.
6. ☐ Computer Program in Microfiche
7. ☐ Genetic Sequence Submission (if applicable, all must be included)
- a. ☐ Paper Copy
- b. ☐ Computer Readable Copy
- c. ☐ Statement Verifying Identical Paper and Computer Readable Copy

Accompanying Application Parts

8. ☐ Assignment Papers (cover sheet & documents)
9. ☐ 37 CFR 3.73(b) Statement (when there is an assignee)
10. ☐ English Translation Document (if applicable)
11. ☐ Information Disclosure Statement/PTO-1449 ☐ Copies of IDS Citations
12. ☒ Preliminary Amendment
13. ☐ Acknowledgment postcard
14. ☐ Certificate of Mailing
- ☐ First Class ☐ Express Mail (Specify Label No.): EL 631 532 204US

UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL (Small Entity)

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Accompanying Application Parts (Continued)

15. ☐ Certified Copy of Priority Document(s) (if foreign priority is claimed)

16. ☐ Small Entity Statement(s) - Specify Number of Statements Submitted: _____

17. ☐ Additional Enclosures (please identify below):

Fee Calculation and Transmittal

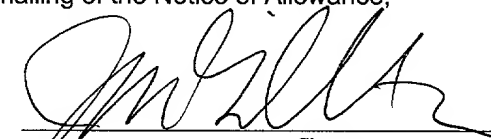
CLAIMS AS FILED

For	#Filed	#Allowed	#Extra	Rate	Fee
Total Claims		- 20 =	0	x \$11.00	\$0.00
Indep. Claims		- 3 =	0	x \$41.00	\$0.00
Multiple Dependent Claims (check if applicable) <input type="checkbox"/>					\$0.00
BASIC FEE					\$395.00
OTHER FEE (specify purpose) _____					\$0.00
TOTAL FILING FEE					\$395.00

- ☐ A check in the amount of _____ to cover the filing fee is enclosed.
- ☐ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge and credit Deposit Account No. _____ as described below. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

- ☐ Charge the amount of _____ as filing fee.
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- ☐ Charge any additional filing fees required under 37 C.F.R. 1.16 and 1.17.
- ☐ Charge the issue fee set in 37 C.F.R. 1.18 at the mailing of the Notice of Allowance, pursuant to 37 C.F.R. 1.311(b).

Dated: 11/15/00



Signature

J.M. (MARK) GILBRETH, Reg No. 33,388
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CC:

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

IN RE APPLICANTS: Boyce D. Burts, Jr.

§

ART UNIT NO.: 1721

FILED: October 31, 1997

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§

SERIAL NO. 08/962,209

§

EXAMINER: C. Kelly

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§

TITLE: *Additive For, Treatment Fluid For
and Method of Plugging a Tubing/
Casing Annulus in a Wellbore*

§

§

DOCKET NO. 23267/19C2

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

The Assistant Commissioner of Patents
Washington, DC 20231

Dear Sir:

Please enter the Preliminary Amendment prior to calculation of the filing fee.

The following amendments are respectfully submitted:

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Page 1, prior to the section "Background of the Invention" please insert:

Related Application Data

This application is a Continuation application of U.S. Patent Application Serial
No. 08/962,209 filed October 31, 1997.

AMENDMENTS

IN THE CLAIMS


Please cancel claims 14-23 prior to calculation of the filing fee.

REMARKS

Applicant hereby requests prosecution of claims 1-13 and 24-33.

If it would be of assistance in resolving any issues in this application, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact applicants' attorney Mark Gilbreth at 713/667-1200.

Respectfully submitted,


.....
J. M. (Mark) Gilbreth, Registration No. 33,388
Attorney for Applicant

Date: November 15, 2000

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PATENT SPECIFICATION

TITLE: ADDITIVE FOR, TREATMENT FLUID FOR, AND
METHOD OF PLUGGING A TUBING/CASING
ANNULUS IN A WELL BORE

INVENTOR: BOYCE D. BURTS, JR.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to tubing/casing
annulus plug additives, to tubing/casing annulus plug
treatment fluids made therefrom, to methods of plugging
a tubing/casing annulus in a well bore. In another
aspect, the present invention relates to tubing/casing
10 annulus plug additives comprising polymer and fibers or
comminuted plant materials, to tubing/casing annulus plug
treatment fluids made therefrom, to methods plugging a
tubing/casing annulus in a well bore.

15 2. Description of the Related Art

Portland cement is commonly used in oil field
applications such as oil well cement jobs. Portland
cements can be tailor-made for the specific conditions of
each well. A description of the state of the art in oil
20 well cementing technology is given in Basic Cementing,

Petroleum Publishing Co., 1977 (reprinted from a series of articles appearing in the Oil and Gas Journal) and Rike, J. L., et al, Squeeze Cementing: State of The Art, Journal of Petroleum Technology, (January 1982), pp. 37-45.

Formulation of the cement in the field is largely a product of trial and error by field personnel to meet irregularities in the cementing composition and the downhole environment. Cement quality control is difficult to achieve under such conditions. As a result, Portland cement can exhibit premature set-up, cracking, or shrinking upon curing. This feature of Portland cement limits its usefulness in wellbore treatments to repair leaks in wellbore casing or tubing by plugging the tubing/casing pair annulus. Use of other available methods to remedy leaking wellbore tubulars, including workovers and redrilling, can be extremely cumbersome and expensive.

U.S. Patent No. 4,730,674, issued March 15, 1988 to Burdge et al., noted that a wellbore treatment process was needed for preventing or repairing leaking tubulars which was both economically and operationally attractive. Burdge et al. further noted that a process was needed which effectively employed a plugging material having a

broad range of highly controllable and predictable set-up times for ease of operation and design. Burdge et al. even further noted that a process was needed which employed a plugging material which was not as susceptible as Portland cement to shrinking and cracking when applied to a tubing/casing annulus in a wellbore.

In an effort to overcome the deficiencies of the prior art and to fulfill the perceived needs, U.S. Patent No. 4,730,674 discloses the use of a water soluble carboxylate crosslinking polymer along with a chromic carboxylate complex crosslinking agent in the plugging of a tubing/casing annulus in a wellbore, and at column 2, lines 30-35, specifically teaches away from the use of solids in the plugging fluid injected into the wellbore.

Thus, while U.S. Patent No. 5,377,760, issued January 3, 1995 to Merrill discloses addition of fibers to an aqueous solution of partially hydrolyzed polyacrylamide polymer, with subsequent injection into the subterranean to improve conformance, the performance requirements of conformance improvement treatment polymers are so different from those of polymers for plugging an abandoned well, that such would not necessarily work for plugging tubing/casing annulus. Furthermore, Burdge et al. teach away from injection a

solid containing polymer into the wellbore to plug a tubing/casing annulus.

Additionally, Merrill's conformance treatment method of mixing the fibers with the polymer solution followed by injection, requires a multiplicity of storage and mixing tanks, and a metering system which must be operated during the operation of the well. Specifically, a first tank will store a water and polymer solution, a second tank will store a water and cross-linking solution, and a third tank will be used to mix fibers with polymer solution from the first tank to create a polymer/fiber slurry. This polymer/fiber slurry is then metered from the third tank and combined with cross-linking solution metered from the second tank to the well bore.

Thus, in spite of the advancements in the prior art, there still need for further innovation in the tubing/casing annulus plug additives.

There is need for further innovation for tubing/casing annulus plug additives utilizing a water soluble polymer.

There is another need for a tubing/casing annulus plug additive which would allow for simplification of the mixing equipment.

[illegible]

2.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide for further innovation in tubing/casing annulus plug additives.

5 It is an another object of the present invention to provide for further innovation for tubing/casing annulus plug additives utilizing a water soluble polymer.

10 It is even another object of the present invention to provide for a tubing/casing annulus plug additive which would allow for simplification of the mixing equipment.

15 These and other objects of the present invention will become apparent to those of skill in the art upon review of this specification, including its drawings and claims.

20 According to one embodiment of the present invention there is provided a tubing/casing annulus plug additive comprising a dry mixture of water soluble crosslinkable polymer, a crosslinking agent, and a reinforcing material selected from among fibers and comminuted plant materials. In preferred embodiments, the polymer is an a carboxylate-containing polymer and the crosslinking agent is a chromic carboxylate complex. In other preferred embodiments, the reinforcing material may

comprise hydrophobic fibers selected from among nylon, rayon, and hydrocarbon fibers, and/or hydrophilic fibers selected from among glass, cellulose, carbon, silicon, graphite, calcined petroleum coke, and cotton fibers.

5 The comminuted plant material is selected from the group of comminuted plant materials of nut and seed shells or hulls of almond, brazil, cocoa bean, coconut, cotton, flax, grass, linseed, maize, millet, oat, peach, peanut, rice, rye, soybean, sunflower, walnut, and wheat; rice
10 tips; rice straw; rice bran; crude pectate pulp; peat moss fibers; flax; cotton; cotton linters; wool; sugar cane; paper; bagasse; bamboo; corn stalks; sawdust; wood; bark; straw; cork; dehydrated vegetable matter; whole ground corn cobs; corn cob light density pith core; corn
15 cob ground woody ring portion; corn cob chaff portion; cotton seed stems; flax stems; wheat stems; sunflower seed stems; soybean stems; maize stems; rye grass stems; millet stems; and mixtures thereof.

According to another embodiment of the present
20 invention, there is provided a method of forming a tubing/casing annulus plug fluid. The method generally includes taking the above tubing/casing annulus plug additive and contacting it with water or other aqueous solution.

According to even another embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a method of preventing plugging a tubing/casing annulus. The method generally includes contacting the above described tubing/casing annulus plug additive with water or an aqueous solution to form a tubing/casing annulus plug fluid. The method then includes injecting the tubing/casing annulus plug fluid into the wellbore.

These and other embodiments of the present invention will become apparent to those of skill in the art upon review of this specification and claims.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

5 The tubing/casing annulus plug additive of the present invention includes polymer, cross-linking agent and either fibers or comminuted particles of plant materials. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the tubing/casing annulus plug additive is a dry mixture of polymer, cross-linking agent and either fibers or comminuted particles of plant materials.

10 The present invention provides a wellbore treatment additive, fluid and process for plugging a tubing/casing annulus in a wellbore in communication with a subterranean hydrocarbon-bearing formation. The process is particularly applicable to injection or production wells in oil fields wherein the tubing and/or casing have developed leaks which enable undesirable flow of fluids into, out of, or vertically through the annulus formed between the tubing/casing pair. Leaks in the tubing and/or casing can be caused inter alia by corrosion, mechanical abrasion or thread leaks.

20 The leaks can result in serious operational, safety and/or environmental problems, especially where brines leak into and fill the annulus between the tubing/casing pair. The brines cause severe corrosion of the metal

materials in the wellbore which ultimately can lead to loss of the well.

The present invention prevents the unwanted vertical flow of fluids in the tubing/casing annulus as well as unwanted flow of fluids into or out of leaking tubing and/or casing in a cost-effective and operationally attractive manner. The process is applicable as a remedial treatment for existing leaking wells and as a preventive treatment for new or non-leaking wells.

The objectives of the present invention are achieved by means of a plugging material comprising a tailor-made crosslinked polymer gel.

"Gel" as used herein is directed to a continuous three-dimensional crosslinked polymeric network having an ultra high molecular weight. The gel contains a liquid medium such as water which is confined within the solid polymeric network. The fusion of a liquid and a solid component into a single-phase system provides the gel with a unique phase behavior. Gels employed by the present invention have sufficient structure so as not to propagate from the confines of a plugged volume into a less permeable region of the formation adjoining the volume when injected into the volume.

"Plugging" is a substantial reduction in permeability of a volume in the wellbore sufficient to prevent or inhibit fluid flow therethrough.

5 "Partially gelled" solutions are also referred to herein. A partially gelled solution is at least somewhat more viscous than an uncrosslinked polymer solution such that it is incapable of entering a less permeable region where no treatment is desired, but sufficiently fluid such that it is capable of displacement into a desired treatment zone. The crosslinking agent of the partially gelled solution has reacted incompletely with the polymer with the result that neither all of the polymer nor all of the crosslinking agent in the gelation solution is totally consumed by the crosslinking reaction. The 10 partially gelled solution is capable of further crosslinking to completion resulting in the desired gel without the addition of more crosslinking agent. 15

20 "Crosslinked to completion" means that the gel composition is incapable of further crosslinking because one or both of the required reactants in the initial solution are consumed. Further crosslinking is only possible if either polymer, crosslinking agent, or both are added to the gel composition.

The preferred gel of the present invention contains a high molecular weight, water-soluble carboxylate-containing polymer, a chromic carboxylate complex crosslinking agent, and fibers and/or comminuted plant material.

The gel is generally prepared by forming in any order, by any suitable method and with type of equipment, a uniform gelation solution of the polymer, crosslinking agent, and fibers and/or comminuted plant material. In a preferred embodiment, the gel is prepared by contacting a dry mixture of the polymer, crosslinking agent and fibers and/or comminuted plant material, with water or an aqueous solution.

Once the solution is formed, the method of the present invention includes injecting the solution into the annulus between a tubing/casing pair in a wellbore penetrating a hydrocarbon-bearing formation. The gelation solution is gelled to substantial completion in the annulus thereby plugging the annulus.

The gelation solution may be advantageously designed to be at least partially gelled by the time it reaches the annulus to inhibit or prevent its propagation into a less permeable material, which may adjoin the casing where no plugging is desired, such as a formation matrix.

The gelation solution sets up in the annulus without requiring the further injection of any additional components. The gel is a continuous single-phase material which substantially plugs the annulus. After
5 the treatment, the well may be returned to normal operation.

The process provides distinct advantages over processes known in the art. The gelation solution, as initially injected into the well-bore, is a uniform
10 nonviscous liquid solution prepared at the surface. The resulting gel forms a tenacious chemical bond with the tubular surfaces and is substantially impermeable to formation fluids. The gel is designed to be non-flowing to the maximum rheological stress of the system, which
15 enables it to substantially resist displacement from the annulus during oil recovery operations. Yet, the gel is not so strong that placement of the gel in the annulus precludes subsequent tube pulling or workover operations in the wellbore. The gel is substantially permanent and
20 resistant to degradation in the subterranean environment. However, if subsequent removal of the gel from the annulus is desired, it can be dissolved by an external solvent, such as solutions of sodium hypochlorite, hydrogen peroxide, or any other suitable peroxo compound.

The cementing gel employed in the present invention possesses a broad range of highly controllable and predictable set-up times and strengths. The process is applicable to a broad range of temperatures, salinities, rock formations, and environments. The practitioner can customize or tailor a gel for specific operational constraints, downhole characteristics and subsequent performance demands. One can predetermine the gelation rate and resultant gel strength and stability which are required of a gel to meet the performance demands in the wellbore. Thereafter, a cementing gel having the required predetermined properties is produced under controlled conditions at the surface by utilizing observed correlations between specific controllable gelation parameters and resultant gel properties.

Any suitable relative amounts of the polymer, cross-linking agent and either fibers or comminuted particles of plant materials may be utilized in the present invention provided that the desired tubing/casing annulus plug results are achieved. Generally, the fibers or comminuted particles will comprise in the range of about 1 to about 99 weight percent, preferably in the range of about 25 to about 90 weight percent, more preferably in the range of about 50 to about 80 weight percent, and

even more preferably in the range of about 70 to about 75 weight percent, all based on the total with of the polymer, fibers and particles. A suitable amount of crosslinking agent is provided to reach the desired amount of crosslinking. Suitable amounts of dispersants, retarders, accelerents, and other additives may be provided as necessary or desired.

The polymer utilized in the practice of the present invention is preferably water soluble and must be capable of being pumped as a liquid and subsequently crosslinked in place to form a substantially non-flowing crosslinked polymer which has sufficient strength to withstand the pressures exerted on it. Moreover, it must have a network structure capable of incorporating reinforcing fibers.

While any suitable water soluble polymer may be utilized, the preferred polymer utilized in the practice of the present invention is a carboxylate-containing polymer. This preferred carboxylate-containing polymer may be any crosslinkable, high molecular weight, water-soluble, synthetic polymer or biopolymer containing one or more carboxylate species.

The average molecular weight of the carboxylate-containing polymer utilized in the practice

of the present invention is in the range of about 10,000 to about 50,000,000, preferably in the range of about 100,000 to about 20,000,000, and most preferably in the range of about 200,000 to about 15,000,000.

5 Biopolymers useful in the present invention include polysaccharides and modified polysaccharides. Non-limiting examples of biopolymers are xanthan gum, guar gum, carboxymethylcellulose, o-carboxychitosans, hydroxyethylcellulose, hydroxypropylcellulose, and
10 modified starches. Non-limiting examples of useful synthetic polymers include acrylamide polymers, such as polyacrylamide, partially hydrolyzed polyacrylamide and terpolymers containing acrylamide, acrylate, and a third species. As defined herein, polyacrylamide (PA) is an
15 acrylamide polymer having substantially less than 1% of the acrylamide groups in the form of carboxylate groups. Partially hydrolyzed polyacrylamide (PHPA) is an acrylamide polymer having at least 1%, but not 100%, of the acrylamide groups in the form of carboxylate groups.
20 The acrylamide polymer may be prepared according to any conventional method known in the art, but preferably has the specific properties of acrylamide polymer prepared according to the method disclosed by U.S. Pat. No. Re.

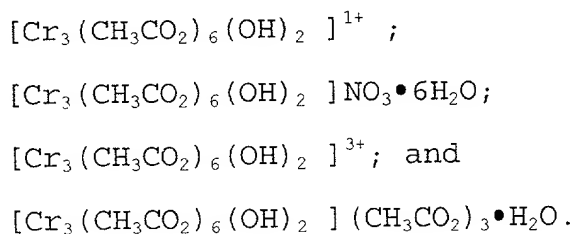
32,114 to Argabright et al incorporated herein by reference.

Any crosslinking agent suitable for use with the selected polymer may be utilized in the practice of the present invention. Preferably, the crosslinking agent utilized in the present invention is a chromic carboxylate complex.

The term "complex" is defined herein as an ion or molecule containing two or more interassociated ionic, radical or molecular species. A complex ion as a whole has a distinct electrical charge while a complex molecule is electrically neutral. The term "chromic carboxylate complex" encompasses a single complex, mixtures of complexes containing the same carboxylate species, and mixtures of complexes containing differing carboxylate species.

The chromic carboxylate complex useful in the practice of the present invention includes at least one or more electropositive chromium III species and one or more electronegative carboxylate species. The complex may advantageously also contain one or more electronegative hydroxide and/or oxygen species. It is believed that, when two or more chromium III species are present in the complex, the oxygen or hydroxide species

may help to bridge the chromium III species. Each complex optionally contains additional species which are not essential to the polymer crosslinking function of the complex. For example, inorganic mono- and/or divalent ions, which function merely to balance the electrical charge of the complex, or one or more water molecules may be associated with each complex. Non-limiting representative formulae of such complexes include:



"Trivalent chromium" and "chromic ion" are equivalent terms encompassed by the term "chromium III" species as used herein.

The carboxylate species are advantageously derived from water-soluble salts of carboxylic acids, especially low molecular weight mono-basic acids. Carboxylate species derived from salts of formic, acetic, propionic, and lactic acid, substituted derivatives thereof and mixtures thereof are preferred. The preferred carboxylate species include the following water-soluble species: formate, acetate, propionate, lactate,

substituted derivatives thereof, and mixtures thereof. Acetate is the most preferred carboxylate species. Examples of optional inorganic ions include sodium, sulfate, nitrate and chloride ions.

5 A host of complexes of the type described above and their method of preparation are well known in the leather tanning art. These complexes are described in Shuttleworth and Russel, Journal of the Society of Leather Trades' Chemists, "The Kinetics of Chrome Tannage Part I.," United Kingdom, 1965, v. 49, p. 133-154; "Part
10 III.," United Kingdom, 1965, v. 49, p. 251-260; "Part IV.," United Kingdom, 1965, v. 49, p. 261-268; and Von Erdman, Das Leder, "Condensation of Mononuclear Chromium (III) Salts to Polynuclear Compounds," Eduard Roether
15 Verlag, Darmstadt Germany, 1963, v. 14, p. 249; and incorporated herein by reference. Udy, Marvin J., Chromium. Volume 1: Chemistry of Chromium and its Compounds. Reinhold Publishing Corp., N.Y., 1956, pp. 229-233; and Cotton and Wilkinson, Advanced Inorganic
20 Chemistry 3rd Ed., John Wiley and Sons, Inc., N.Y., 1972, pp. 836-839, further describe typical complexes which may be within the scope of the present invention and are incorporated herein by reference. The present invention is not limited to the specific complexes and mixtures

thereof described in the references, but may include others satisfying the above-stated definition.

Salts of chromium and an inorganic monovalent anion, e.g., CrCl_3 , may also be combined with the crosslinking agent complex to accelerate gelation of the polymer solution, as described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,723,605 to Sydanski, which is incorporated herein by reference.

The molar ratio of carboxylate species to chromium III in the chromic carboxylate complexes used in the process of the present invention is typically in the range of 1:1 to 3.9:1. The preferred ratio is range of 2:1 to 3.9:1 and the most preferred ratio is 2.5:1 to 3.5:1.

The additive of the present invention may comprise fibers or comminuted particles of plant materials, and preferably comprises comminuted particles of one or more plant materials.

Fibers suitable for use in the present invention are selected from among hydrophilic and hydrophobic fibers. Incorporation of hydrophobic fibers will require use of a suitable wetting agent. Preferably, the fibers utilized in the present invention comprise hydrophilic fibers, most preferably both hydrophilic and hydrophobic fibers.

With respect to any particular fiber employed in the practice of the present invention, it is believed that the longer the fiber, the more difficult it is to be mixed uniformly in solution. It is believed that fibers as long as 12,500 microns may tend to aggregate and form clumps. The shorter the fiber, it is believed the easier it is to mix in solution. On the other hand, the shorter the fiber, the greater the quantity necessary to provide the desired level of strength in a reinforced mature gel. In general, the fibers utilized in the present invention will have a length in the range of 100 microns to 3200 microns, preferable 100 microns to 1000 microns.

Non-limiting examples of suitable hydrophobic fibers include nylon, rayon, hydrocarbon fibers and mixtures thereof.

Non-limiting examples of suitable hydrophilic fibers include glass, cellulose, carbon, silicon, graphite, calcined petroleum coke, cotton fibers, and mixtures thereof.

Non-limiting examples of comminuted particles of plant materials suitable for use in the present invention include any derived from: nut and seed shells or hulls such as those of peanut, almond, brazil, cocoa bean, coconut, cotton, flax, grass, linseed, maize, millet,

oat, peach, peanut, rice, rye, soybean, sunflower,
walnut, wheat; various portions of rice including the
rice tips, rice straw and rice bran; crude pectate pulp;
peat moss fibers; flax; cotton; cotton linters; wool;
5 sugar cane; paper; bagasse; bamboo; corn stalks; various
tree portions including sawdust, wood or bark; straw;
cork; dehydrated vegetable matter (suitably dehydrated
carbonhydrates such as citrus pulp, oatmeal, tapioca,
10 rice grains, potatoes, carrots, beets, and various grain
sorghams); whole ground corn cobs; or various plant
portions the corn cob light density pith core, the corn
cob ground woody ring portion, the corn cob coarse or
fine chaff portion, cotton seed stems, flax stems, wheat
15 stems, sunflower seed stems, soybean stems, maize stems,
rye grass stems, millet stems, and various mixtures of
these materials.

Optionally, dispersant for comminuted plant material
will be utilized the in the range of about 1 to about 20
pounds, preferably in the range of about 5 to about 10
20 pounds, and more preferably in the range of about 7 to
about 8 pounds of dispersant may be utilized per pound of
comminuted plant material. A non-limiting example of a
suitable dispersant is NaCl.

Preferred comminuted materials useful in the practice of the present invention include those derived from peanuts, wood, paper any portion of rice seed or plant, and any portion of corn cobs.

5 These various materials can be comminuted to very fine particle sizes by drying the products and using hammer mills, cutter heads, air control mills or other comminution methods as is well known to those of skill in the comminution art. Air classification equipment or
10 other means can be used for separation of desired ranges of particle sizes using techniques well-known in the comminution art.

 Any suitable size of comminuted material may be utilized in the present invention, along as such size
15 produces results which are desired. In most instances, the size range of the comminuted materials utilized herein will range from below about 8 mesh ("mesh" as used herein refers to standard U.S. mesh), preferably from about -65 mesh to about -100 mesh, and more preferably
20 from about -65 mesh to about -85 mesh. Specifically preferred particle sizes for some materials are provided below.

 Preferred mixtures of comminuted materials useful in the practice of the present invention include a rice

fraction and peanut hulls; a rice fraction and wood fiber and/or almond hulls; a rice fraction and a corn cob fraction, preferably a chaff portion; and a corn cob fraction, preferably a pith or chaff portion, a rice fraction, and at least one of wood fiber, nut shells, paper and shredded cellophane.

Rice is commercially available in the form of rice hulls, rice tips, rice straw and rice bran, as these various parts of the rice plant are separated commercially and are widely available from rice mills. Preferably, the size range of the rice fraction utilized herein will range from below about 8 mesh ("mesh" as used herein refers to standard U.S. mesh), preferably from about -65 mesh to about -100 mesh, and more preferably from about -65 mesh to about -85 mesh.

After the corn kernels are removed, corn cobs consist of four principle parts that are arranged concentrically. The central portion is a very light density pith core, that is surrounded by a woody ring, that in turn is surrounded by a coarse chaff portion, that in turn is covered by a fine chaff portion. The coarse and fine chaff portions form the sockets for anchoring the corn kernels to the corncob. The normal methods of grinding corncobs produce a mixture of all

four parts enumerated above. It is possible, however, to separate the woody ring material from the remainder of the cob. The chaff portion of the corncob remaining after removal of the woody ring material is known as "bees wings". In the present invention, any of the pith or chaff portions("BPC") are the preferred portions of the corn cob, with the chaff portions being more preferred. A range of particle sizes of pith and chaff can be obtained from comminution, but the size range smaller than about 8 mesh is suitable for this invention. Preferably, a particle size distribution ranging from smaller than 8 mesh to smaller than 100 mesh is utilized.

Preferred woods for use as comminuted materials in the present invention include any type of hard wood fiber, including cedar fiber, oak fiber, pecan fiber and elm fiber. Preferably the wood fiber comprises cedar fibers.

Preferred nut shells for use in the present invention include pecan, walnut, and almond. Preferably, the nut shells comprise at least one of pecan or walnut shells.

Preferred particle sizes for the wood fibers, nut shells, paper and cellophane will generally range from about +10 mesh to -100 mesh. An illustration of a non-

limiting particle size distribution for these materials would include particles of +10 mesh, +20 mesh, +30 mesh, +50 mesh, +60 mesh, +100 mesh, and -100 mesh.

For one of the preferred comminuted plant mixtures comprising a corn cob fraction, a rice fraction, and at least one of wood fiber, nut shells, paper and shredded cellophane, the mixture will generally comprise in the range of about 5 to about 95 weight percent rice, in the range of about 5 to about 95 weight percent corncob pith or chaff, with the total of ground wood fiber, ground nut shells, ground paper and shredded cellophane comprising in the range of about 5 to about 95 weight percent (weight percent based on the total weight of plant material in the mixture. Preferred ranges are about 20 to about 75 weight percent rice, about 5 to about 35 weight percent corncob pith or chaff, with the total of ground wood fiber, ground nut shells, ground paper and shredded cellophane comprising in the range of about 20 to about 75 weight percent. More preferred ranges are about 30 to about 50 weight percent rice, about 10 to about 30 weight percent corncob pith and chaff, with the total of ground wood fiber, ground nut shells, ground paper and shredded cellophane comprising in the range of about 25 to about 50 weight percent.

As these comminuted materials are to be added to a water base tubing/casing annulus plug fluid, a small amount of oil may optionally added to the mixture. This optional oil is preferably added while the plant materials are being mixed together. This mixing may take place in a ribbon blender, where the oil in the required amount is applied by a spray bar. The oil wets the particles and adds to their lubricity while at the same time helping to control dust produced by the mixing operation. A variety of oils may be utilized in the practice of the present invention in concentrations generally ranging from about 1 percent to about 5 percent by weight based on the total weight of the mixture of comminuted materials, more preferably ranging from about 1 percent to about 2 percent. A non-limiting example of a commercially available oil suitable for use in the present invention includes ISOPAR V, available from Exxon Corporation.

The various components of the present invention may be mixed in any suitable order utilizing mixing techniques as known to those in the art, including dry mixing of the various components prior to addition to water, or alternatively, either or both of the polymer and cross-linking agent may be utilized as a solution.

Most preferably, the various components are mixed in dry form, and then contacted with water or aqueous solution to form a tubing/casing annulus plug fluid. This tubing/casing annulus plug fluid is then injected into the well as is known in the art.

It is apparent that one can produce gels across a very broad range of gelation rates and gel properties as a function of the gelation conditions. Thus, to effect an optimum plugging job according to the present process, the practitioner predetermines the gelation rate and properties of the resultant gel which meet the demands of the given wellbore and thereafter produces the gel having these predetermined characteristics. The demands of the wellbore include the in situ gelation conditions such as temperature, connate water properties, size of the treatment volume, the pressure drop and permeability of the adjoining matrix as well as the post treatment conditions such as injection and production pressures. Analytical methods known to one skilled in the art are used to determine these demands which provide criteria to predetermine the gelation rate and resultant gel properties in the manner described above and continuing hereafter.

The gelation rate is advantageously sufficiently slow to enable preparation of the gelation solution at the surface and injection of the solution as a uniform slug into the wellbore annulus. Too rapid a gelation rate produces excessive gelation of the solution at the surface which results in a solution that may be difficult, if not impossible, to inject into the annulus to be plugged due to its rheological properties. At the same time, the gelation rate must be sufficiently rapid to enable completion of the reaction within a reasonable period of time so that the well may be activated after the plugging job.

The solution may be substantially ungelled before reaching the annulus. However, at least partial gelation of the solution may be advantageous before the solution reaches the annulus being plugged. Partial gelation prevents the solution from penetrating permeable rock in fluid communication with the annulus. Substantial penetration of permeable rock by the solution and its ensuing permeability reduction may be counterproductive to the plugging of the annulus. The solution advantageously gels to completion in the annulus. The values of the independent variables in the process are

carefully selected to achieve a gelation rate meeting these criteria.

The amount of solution injected into the wellbore is a function of the volume of the annulus to be plugged. One skilled in the art can determine the required amount of a gel for a given volume to be plugged. Placement of the gelation solution in the annulus may be facilitated by zone isolation means such as packers and the like.

The injection rate is a function of the gelation rate and operational constraints of injection pressure and pumping limits. The required injection rate is fixed such that all of the solution can be practically injected into the annulus before it becomes unpumpable. The gelation time of the gel ranges from near instantaneous up to 48 hours or longer. Longer gelation times are limited by practical considerations of lost production when injection and production wells are shut in.

Gels having a predetermined gelation rate and resultant gel properties to meet the demands of a given well are produced by adjusting and setting the surface gelation conditions as they correlate to the gelation rate and gel properties. Accordingly the gels are produced in a manner which renders them insensitive to most extreme formation conditions. The gels can be

stable at formation temperatures as high as 130o C. or more and at any formation pH contemplated. The gels are relatively insensitive to the stratigraphy of the rock, metal tubulars and other materials and chemicals employed in cementing operations. The gels can be employed in carbonate and sandstone strata and unconsolidated or consolidated strata having varying mineralogy. Once the gels are in place, it is extremely difficult to displace the gels by physical or chemical means other than total destruction of the crosslinked network. The gels may be reversible on contact with hydrogen peroxide or sodium hypochlorite, but are substantially insoluble in the formation fluids.

The process is applicable to most oil field wells having a tubing string within a cased wellbore. The process is employed as a remedial treatment process in wellbores having leaking tubulars to displace unwanted brine from the tubing/casing annulus. The process also prevents the subsequent encroachment of brine into the annulus. The process is further employed as a preventive treatment process in new or non-leaking wellbores to preclude brine from entering the annulus should tubular leaks subsequently develop.

The strength of the gel can vary from an elastic jelly-like material to a rigid rubber-like material depending upon the performance demands of the wellbore. The gel is designed to be sufficiently strong not to flow under the maximum rheological stress encountered in flow conduits of the wellbore. Yet, the gel is advantageously not so strong that the tubing cannot be subsequently pulled after treatment if desired. Pulling of the tubing can be facilitated by initially coating the tubular surfaces to contact the gel with a friction-reducing material, such as Teflon, plastic, or grease, prior to applying the process of the present invention.

Stronger rigid gels are generally preferred where extreme drawdown pressures are encountered during production of a well or where extreme injection pressures are encountered during injection of fluids into a well which could cause a weak gel to fail. PA is often preferred for such formulations because it has a slower gelation rate than PHPA which enables one to inject it into a volume before it sets up.

While the illustrative embodiments of the invention have been described with particularity, it will be understood that various other modifications will be apparent to and can be readily made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, it is not intended that the scope of the claims appended hereto be limited to the examples and descriptions set forth herein but rather that the claims be construed as encompassing all the features of patentable novelty which reside in the present invention, including all features which would be treated as equivalents thereof by those skilled in the art to which this invention pertains.

I CLAIM:

1 1. A tubing/casing annulus plug additive comprising a
2 dry mixture of a water soluble crosslinkable polymer,
3 a crosslinking agent, and a reinforcing material selected
4 from among fibers and comminuted plant materials.

1 2. The additive of claim 1 wherein the polymer is an a
2 carboxylate-containing polymer and the crosslinking agent
3 is a chromic carboxylate complex.

1 3. The additive of claim 2 wherein the reinforcing
2 material comprises hydrophilic and hydrophobic fibers.

1 4. The additive of claim 3 wherein the hydrophobic
2 fibers comprise at least one selected from the group of
3 hydrophobic fibers consisting essentially of nylon,
4 rayon, and hydrocarbon fibers, and wherein the
5 hydrophilic fibers comprise at least one selected from
6 the group of hydrophilic fibers consisting essentially of
7 glass, cellulose, carbon, silicon, graphite, calcined
8 petroleum coke, and cotton fibers.

1 5. The additive of claim 2 wherein the reinforcing
2 material comprises comminuted plant material.

1 6. The additive of claim 5 wherein the reinforcing
2 material comprises at least one comminuted material
3 selected from the group of comminuted plant materials
4 consisting essentially of nut and seed shells or hulls of
5 almond, brazil, cocoa bean, coconut, cotton, flax, grass,
6 linseed, maize, millet, oat, peach, peanut, rice, rye,
7 soybean, sunflower, walnut, and wheat; rice tips; rice
8 straw; rice bran; crude pectate pulp; peat moss fibers;
9 flax; cotton; cotton linters; wool; sugar cane; paper;
10 bagasse; bamboo; corn stalks; sawdust; wood; bark; straw;
11 cork; dehydrated vegetable matter; whole ground corn
12 cobs; corn cob light density pith core; corn cob ground
13 woody ring portion; corn cob chaff portion; cotton seed
14 stems; flax stems; wheat stems; sunflower seed stems;
15 soybean stems; maize stems; rye grass stems; millet
16 stems; and mixtures thereof.

1 7. The additive of claim 2 wherein the polymer is a
2 partially hydrolyzed polyacrylamide.

1 8. The additive of claim 7 wherein the reinforcing
2 material is a comminuted material selected from among
3 comminuted materials derived from peanuts, wood, paper
4 any portion of rice seed or plant, any portion of corn
5 cobs, and mixtures thereof.

1 9. The additive of claim 8 wherein the additive further
2 includes cellophane, and wherein the reinforcing material
3 is a comminuted material selected from among mixtures of
4 comminuted rice fraction and peanut hulls; mixtures of
5 comminuted rice fraction, and wood fiber or almond hulls;
6 mixtures of comminuted rice fraction and corn cob
7 fraction; and mixtures of comminuted rice fraction and
8 corn cob fraction and at least one of wood fiber, nut
9 shells, and paper.

1 10. The additive of claim 9 wherein the reinforcing
2 material comprises comminuted mixture of rice fraction,
3 corn cob pith and chaff, cedar fiber, nut shells, and
4 paper.

1 11. A method of forming a tubing/casing annulus plug
2 fluid comprising:

(a) providing a tubing/casing annulus plug additive comprising a dry mixture of water soluble crosslinkable polymer, a crosslinking agent, and a reinforcing material selected from among fibers and comminuted plant materials; and

(b) contacting the tubing/casing annulus plug additive with water or an aqueous solution to form the tubing/casing annulus plug fluid.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the polymer is a partially hydrolyzed polyacrylamide, the crosslinking agent is a chromic carboxylate complex, wherein the additive further includes cellophane, and wherein the reinforcing material is a comminuted material selected from among mixtures of comminuted rice fraction and peanut hulls; mixtures of comminuted rice fraction, and wood fiber or almond hulls; mixtures of comminuted rice fraction and corn cob fraction; and mixtures of comminuted rice fraction and corn cob fraction and at least one of wood fiber, nut shells, and paper.

13. The additive of claim 12 wherein the reinforcing material comprises comminuted mixture of rice fraction,

corn cob pith and chaff, cedar fiber, nut shells, and paper.

14. A method for plugging a tubing/casing annulus formed between a casing and a tube internal to the casing in a wellbore in fluid communication with a subterranean hydrocarbon-bearing formation, the method comprising:

(a) providing a tubing/casing annulus plug additive comprising a dry mixture of water soluble crosslinkable polymer, a crosslinking agent, and a reinforcing material selected from among fibers and comminuted plant materials;

(b) contacting the tubing/casing annulus plug additive with water or an aqueous solution to form a tubing/casing annulus plug fluid;

(c) injecting the tubing/casing annulus plug fluid into the annulus; and

(d) crosslinking said fluid to substantial completion in said annulus to substantially plug said annulus.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein the polymer is an a carboxylate-containing polymer and the crosslinking agent is a chromic carboxylate complex.

1 16. The method of claim 15 wherein the reinforcing
2 material comprises hydrophilic and hydrophobic fibers.

1 17. The method of claim 16 wherein the hydrophobic
2 fibers comprise at least one selected from the group of
3 hydrophobic fibers consisting essentially of nylon,
4 rayon, and hydrocarbon fibers, and wherein the
5 hydrophilic fibers comprise at least one selected from
6 the group of hydrophilic fibers consisting essentially of
7 glass, cellulose, carbon, silicon, graphite, calcined
8 petroleum coke, and cotton fibers.

1 18. The method of claim 15 wherein the reinforcing
2 material comprises comminuted plant material.

1 19. The method of claim 18 wherein the reinforcing
2 material comprises at least one comminuted material
3 selected from the group of comminuted plant materials
4 consisting essentially of nut and seed shells or hulls of
5 almond, brazil, cocoa bean, coconut, cotton, flax, grass,
6 linseed, maize, millet, oat, peach, peanut, rice, rye,
7 soybean, sunflower, walnut, and wheat; rice tips; rice
8 straw; rice bran; crude pectate pulp; peat moss fibers;

9 flax; cotton; cotton linters; wool; sugar cane; paper;
10 bagasse; bamboo; corn stalks; sawdust; wood; bark; straw;
11 cork; dehydrated vegetable matter; whole ground corn
12 cobs; corn cob light density pith core; corn cob ground
13 woody ring portion; corn cob chaff portion; cotton seed
14 stems; flax stems; wheat stems; sunflower seed stems;
15 soybean stems; maize stems; rye grass stems; millet
16 stems; and mixtures thereof.

1 20. The method of claim 15 wherein the polymer is a
2 partially hydrolyzed polyacrylamide.

1 21. The method of claim 20 wherein the reinforcing
2 material is a comminuted material selected from among
3 comminuted materials derived from peanuts, wood, paper
4 any portion of rice seed or plant, any portion of corn
5 cobs, and mixtures thereof.

1 22. The method of claim 21 wherein the additive further
2 includes cellophane, and wherein the reinforcing material
3 is a comminuted material selected from among mixtures of
4 comminuted rice fraction and peanut hulls; mixtures of
5 comminuted rice fraction, and wood fiber or almond hulls;
6 mixtures of comminuted rice fraction and corn cob

fraction; and mixtures of comminuted rice fraction and corn cob fraction and at least one of wood fiber, nut shells, and paper.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein the reinforcing material comprises comminuted mixture of rice fraction, corn cob pith and chaff, cedar fiber, nut shells, and paper.

24. A method for plugging a tubing/casing annulus formed between a casing and a tube internal to the casing in a wellbore in fluid communication with a subterranean hydrocarbon-bearing formation, the method comprising:

(a) providing a tubing/casing annulus plug additive comprising an aqueous solution of water soluble crosslinkable polymer, a crosslinking agent, and a reinforcing material selected from among fibers and comminuted plant materials;

(b) injecting the tubing/casing annulus plug fluid into the annulus; and

(c) crosslinking said fluid to substantial completion in said annulus to substantially plug said annulus.

1 25. The method of claim 24 wherein the polymer is an a
2 carboxylate-containing polymer and the crosslinking agent
3 is a chromic carboxylate complex.

1 26. The method of claim 25 wherein the reinforcing
2 material comprises hydrophilic and hydrophobic fibers.

1 27. The method of claim 26 wherein the hydrophobic
2 fibers comprise at least one selected from the group of
3 hydrophobic fibers consisting essentially of nylon,
4 rayon, and hydrocarbon fibers, and wherein the
5 hydrophilic fibers comprise at least one selected from
6 the group of hydrophilic fibers consisting essentially of
7 glass, cellulose, carbon, silicon, graphite, calcined
8 petroleum coke, and cotton fibers.

1 28. The method of claim 25 wherein the reinforcing
2 material comprises comminuted plant material.

1 29. The method of claim 28 wherein the reinforcing
2 material comprises at least one comminuted material
3 selected from the group of comminuted plant materials
4 consisting essentially of nut and seed shells or hulls of
5 almond, brazil, cocoa bean, coconut, cotton, flax, grass,

linseed, maize, millet, oat, peach, peanut, rice, rye, soybean, sunflower, walnut, and wheat; rice tips; rice straw; rice bran; crude pectate pulp; peat moss fibers; flax; cotton; cotton linters; wool; sugar cane; paper; bagasse; bamboo; corn stalks; sawdust; wood; bark; straw; cork; dehydrated vegetable matter; whole ground corn cobs; corn cob light density pith core; corn cob ground woody ring portion; corn cob chaff portion; cotton seed stems; flax stems; wheat stems; sunflower seed stems; soybean stems; maize stems; rye grass stems; millet stems; and mixtures thereof.

30. The method of claim 25 wherein the polymer is a partially hydrolyzed polyacrylamide.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein the reinforcing material is a comminuted material selected from among comminuted materials derived from peanuts, wood, paper any portion of rice seed or plant, any portion of corn cobs, and mixtures thereof.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein the additive further includes cellophane, and wherein the reinforcing material is a comminuted material selected from among mixtures of

4 comminuted rice fraction and peanut hulls; mixtures of
5 comminuted rice fraction, and wood fiber or almond hulls;
6 mixtures of comminuted rice fraction and corn cob
7 fraction; and mixtures of comminuted rice fraction and
8 corn cob fraction and at least one of wood fiber, nut
9 shells, and paper.

1 33. The method of claim 32 wherein the reinforcing
2 material comprises comminuted mixture of rice fraction,
3 corn cob pith and chaff, cedar fiber, nut shells, and
4 paper.

ABSTRACT

1 For tubing/casing annulus plug treatment to plug a
2 well, a tubing/casing annulus plug additive including a
3 dry mixture of water soluble crosslinkable polymer, a
4 crosslinking agent, and a reinforcing material of fibers
5 and/or comminuted plant materials. The method of forming
6 a tubing/casing annulus plug fluid includes contacting
7 the additive with water or an aqueous solution, with a
8 method of plugging the tubing/casing annulus of a well
9 further including the step of injecting the fluid into
10 the annulus.

Docket No.
23267/19

Declaration and Power of Attorney For Patent Application

English Language Declaration

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name,

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

Additive For, Treatment Fluid For and Method of Plugging a Tubing/Casing Annulus in a Wellbore

the specification of which

(check one)

☐ is attached hereto.

☒ was filed on October 31, 1998 as United States Application No. or PCT International Application Number 08/962,209 and was amended on _____ (if applicable)

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the United States Patent and Trademark Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119(a)-(d) or Section 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or Section 365(a) of any PCT International application which designated at least one country other than the United States, listed below and have also identified below, by checking the box, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate or PCT International application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

Prior Foreign Application(s)

Priority Not Claimed

(Number)

(Country)

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

☐

(Number)

(Country)

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

☐

(Number)

(Country)

(Day/Month/Year Filed)

☐

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. Section 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U. S. C. Section 120 of any United States application(s), or Section 365(c) of any PCT International application designating the United States, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT International application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. Section 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose to the United States Patent and Trademark Office all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, C. F. R., Section 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT International filing date of this application:

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status)
(patented, pending, abandoned)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status)
(patented, pending, abandoned)

(Application Serial No.)

(Filing Date)

(Status)
(patented, pending, abandoned)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agent(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith. *(list name and registration number)*

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